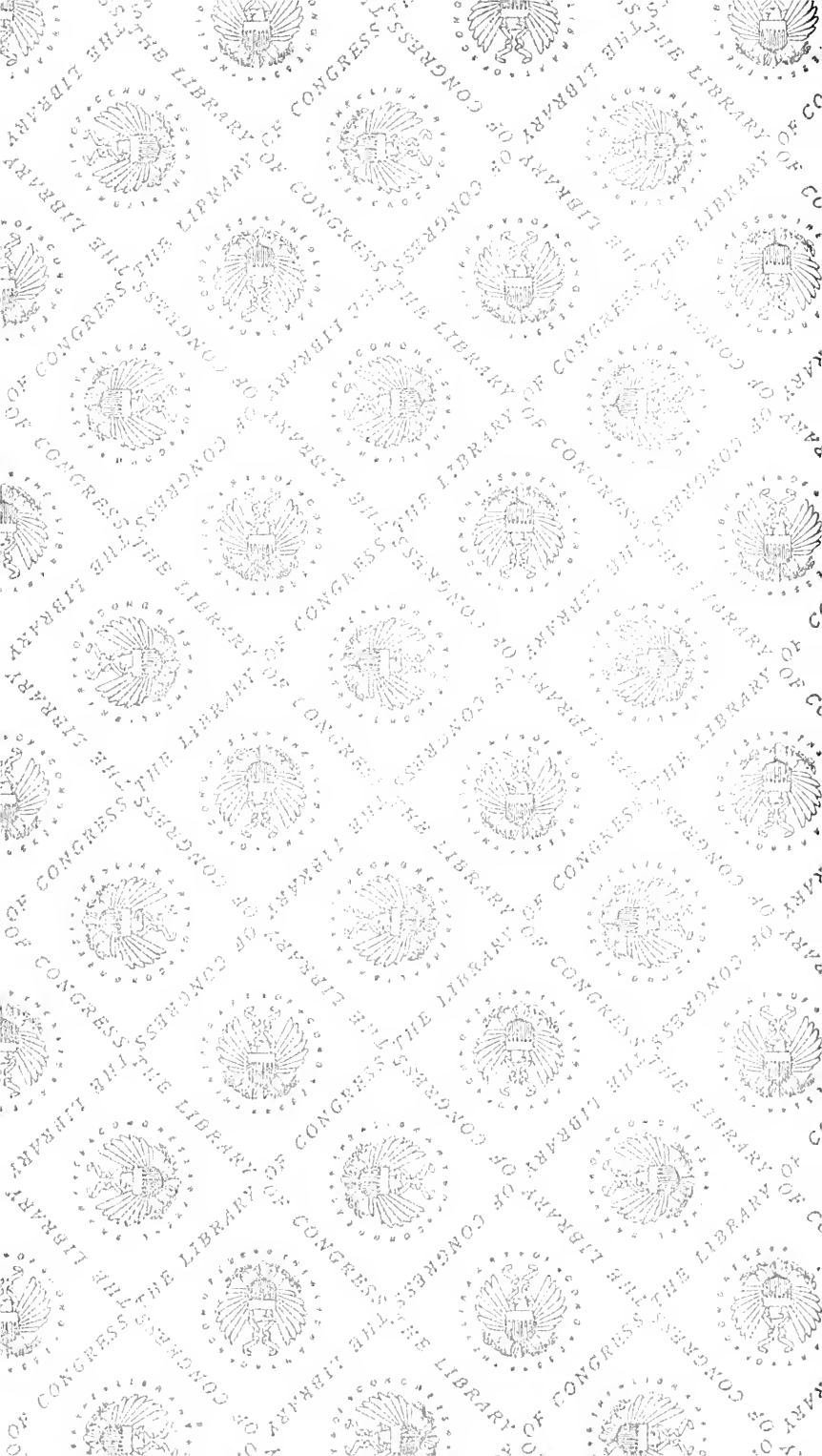


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SLAVERY AMONG THE PURITANS.

A

LETTER

TO

THE REV. MOSES STUART.

ALBANY:

BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

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SLAVERY AMONG THE PURITANS.

REV. MOSES STUART.

SIR:

I OFFER no apology for directing your attention to a passage in your Essay on the Constitution, which possibly may convey, to those imperfectly acquainted with colonial history, a false impression of the sentiments which were entertained by the Puritanical Fathers of Massachusetts on the subject of slavery. As you have with great propriety alluded to their views respecting it, I feel assured that you will pardon me for suggesting any oversight, that, in the hurry of composition, may have escaped your notice; knowing full well, that your familiarity with our annals, and your supreme regard for truth, will effectually secure you against mistakes arising from any other source. Nor do I admit the necessity of excusing myself to the descendants of those venerable men, should the costume in which they are here presented be different in some respects from what imagination has sometimes cast about them.

They require no adventitious aid. Never a set of men more ready than they to stand the gaze of truth, and with good reason; none had less to fear from her scrutiny.

The passage in my mind occurs on page 109 :

“ I first address the northerners, and specially my fellow-citizens of Massachusetts. In looking back on the history of slavery in our country, where do we find it to have originated? From Great Britain ; and from her alone. All the colonies fought pitched battles against it ; and the king and parliament of Great Britain defeated them. North and South were united on this question ; united before the Declaration of Independence, and united for a long time after it. I can have room to produce but one specimen of protest ; and this is from the pen of Mr. Jefferson, who originally inserted it in our Declaration of Independence which he drew up. It was omitted afterwards merely from delicacy of feeling toward some gentlemen of the South, (South Carolina and Georgia,) and also, as Mr. Jefferson intimates, (3 Madison Papers,) from the same feeling toward some of the delegates from the North, who were engaged in the Guinea trade. Here it is as it came from the hand of Mr. Jefferson. He is speaking of the king of England : ‘ He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him ; capturing and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur a miserable death in the transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of a *Christian* king of Great Britain. Determined to keep an open market where *men* should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or control this execrable commerce.’ ”

It will readily be seen that this bolt of Mr. Jefferson was launched exclusively against the slave trade, and not against domestic slavery as it then existed, or ever had existed in the colonies. But, on a hasty perusal of your remarks, there is danger lest an impression be made, that the pitched battles to which you refer were fought by the colonies against the admission of slavery among themselves ; that it was at length forcibly thrust upon them “ from Great Britain and from her alone ; ” that these efforts for its exclusion would have been crowned with success but for the overwhelming power of the

King and Parliament; in short, that slavery owed its introduction into Massachusetts Bay, and its long continuance there, to the irresistible force of the mother country, in direct opposition to the moral sense and professed inclinations of the people.

I am perfectly aware that nothing was further from your intention than the inculcation of such a belief; but as that, or something analogous to it, is likely enough, in the present excitement, to be embraced by some who may chance to read without due reflection, I have attempted to ascertain and to express as well as I could in so brief a space, what the views and feelings, on the subject of slavery in Massachusetts, were from the beginning of her colonial existence, until within a very short time previous to the Revolution.

Although my remarks will be confined mainly to the inhabitants of the Bay, yet as the early settlers of Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven were imbued with the same religious sentiments; and as a close political alliance, commencing with the earliest times, subsisted without interruption a long while among them, creating the necessity of constant intercourse — they will apply to all those colonies; and with but slight modification, to all the colonies of New England.

To understand the position which the colonists occupied in relation to slavery, it will be necessary to call to mind their early training; and the notions respecting personal freedom which were prevalent in their day. Democracy of the most rampant kind had been taught in England long before that period. Shakspeare has handed down a specimen of it in his Jack Cade; but it had long been suppressed, and in no sense can it be said, that democratic sentiments prevailed in the age of Elizabeth. Now let us for a moment contemplate Governor Winthrop. He was a gentleman of education and refinement; glowing with the loftiest enthusiasm to advance the cause of the Redeemer, and intent upon

rescuing his persecuted brethren from what he verily believed to be the merciless grasp of a most corrupt and intolerent hierarchy. He was born in 1587, in the reign of Elizabeth. At that time there were in England white men, Englishmen, Christians, who were, and during their whole existence had been, in a condition far enough removed from a state of freedom, — men not reduced to that abject condition for crime committed either by themselves or their ancestors, — but occupying it simply because they were born to it. They were called villeins. I beg leave to introduce a short description of them from Rees's Cyclopædia :

“ Villain or villein, villanus, in our ancient customs the same with bondman ; called also, in Domesday book, *servus*, slave.

“ A villain is one who holds lands in villenage, or on condition of rendering base services to his lord.

“ Under the Saxon government, there was, as Sir William Temple speaks, a sort of people in condition of downright servitude, employed in the most servile works, and belonging, they and their children and effects, to the lord of the soil, like the rest of the cattle and stock upon it. These seem to have been those who held what was called *folk land*, from which they were removable at the lord's pleasure. On the arrival of the Normans here, it seems not improbable, that they, who were strangers to any other than the fœdal state, might give some sparks of enfranchisement to such wretched persons as fell to their share, by admitting them, as well as others, to the oath of fealty, which conferred a right of protection, and raised the tenant to a kind of state superior to downright slavery, but inferior to every other condition. This they called *villenage*, and the tenants *villains*, either from the word *vilis*, or else, as Sir Edward Coke tells us, *à villa*, because they lived chiefly in villages, and were employed in rustic work of the most sordid kind ; hence they were also denominated *pagences* and *rustici*. These villains belonging principally to lords of manors, were either villains *regardant*, by the civilians called *glebæ addicti* or *ascriptii*, that is, annexed to the manor or land, or else they were in *gross* or at large, that is, annexed to the person of the lord, and transferable from one to another. They could not leave

the lord without his permission ; but if they ran away, or were purloined from him, might be claimed and recovered by action, like beasts or other chattels. They held, indeed, small portions of land by way of sustaining themselves and families, but it was at the mere will of the lord, who might dispossess them whenever he pleased ; and it was upon villain services, that is, to carry out dung, to hedge, and ditch the lord's demesnes, and any other, the meanest offices ; and their services were not only base, but uncertain, both as to time and quantity. A villain could acquire no property either in lands or goods ; but if he purchased either, the lord might enter upon them, and oust the villain and seize them to his own use, unless he contrived to dispose of them again before the lord had seized them ; for the lord had then lost his opportunity. In many places, also, a fine was payable to the lord, if the villain presumed to marry his daughter to any one without leave from the lord ; and by the common law, the lord might bring an action against the husband for thus purloining his property ; for the children of villains were in the same state of bondage with their parents, whence they were called, in Latin, *nativi*, whence the female appellation of a villain, who was called *neife*."

Lord Campbell, in his Life of Chief Justice Dyer, says :

"It is not generally known, that, down to the reign of Elizabeth, there were in England both 'villeins in gross,' or *slaves* that might be sold separately, like chattels, and 'villeins regardant,' or *slaves* attached to particular land, with which they were transferred along with the trees growing upon it."

During the entire reign of Elizabeth it might have been as much out of place to preach abolition in England as it is now in Mississippi. No one doubted the rightfulness of villanage, and from villanage to slavery, and thence to the slave trade the transition was easy. Bancroft says :

"The odious distinction of having first interested England in the slave trade belongs to Sir John Hawkins. He fraudulently transported a large cargo of Africans to Hispaniola ; rich returns of sugar, ginger, and pearls, attracted the notice of Queen Elizabeth ; and when a new expedition was prepared, she was induced not only to

protect, but to share in the traffic. In the accounts which Hawkins himself gives of one of his expeditions, he relates that he set fire to a city, of which the huts were covered with dry palm leaves, and out of eight thousand inhabitants, succeeded in seizing two hundred and fifty. The deliberate and self-approving frankness with which this act of atrocity is related, and the lustre which the fame of Hawkins acquired, display, in the strongest terms, the depravity of public sentiment in the age of Elizabeth."

In a short biographical notice of Hawkins, the writer, in alluding to this transaction, says :

"It is the apology of our commander, that, far from its being regarded as a stain on his humanity, he even bore the badge of these exploits on a crest of arms granted him by patent, consisting of a demi-moor in his proper color, bound with a cord."

Hawkins lived till 1595. Nothing more need be said to show the feeling which prevailed at this period in England among the masses in respect to slavery or the slave trade.

"Villeinage," says Lord Campbell again, "is supposed to have finally disappeared in the reign of James I. ; but there is great difficulty in saying when it ceased to be lawful, for there has been no statute to abolish it."

James ascended the throne in 1603, and died in 1625. Hume places the extinction of villanage a little earlier, but on this point, Lord Campbell is probably the better authority.

It was in the midst of such sentiments, and surrounded by such influences, that the early exiles of Massachusetts were educated. Villanage had probably been extinguished in England before their departure ; but this is not absolutely certain. The measures by which this great revolution in society was accomplished, have never been satisfactorily explained. By some it is imputed to the benign spirit of Christianity, silently operating in its legitimate sphere ; others have ascribed it to the spread of civilization, and the advance of the arts. Even the time of disappearance is

a matter of debate. All this shows that the connection between lord and villain was not in that age productive of excitement. Among the mass of documents which the controversies that raged so furiously between the reign of Elizabeth and the commonwealth, brought out, some evidence would exist that would conclusively fix the period of its overthrow, if the least interest had been publicly felt on the subject.

Villains were held almost exclusively by persons of rank and wealth. It was this class which had the control of legislation. If the religious sentiment had made such progress among them as to eradicate selfishness to a degree that would induce them, from conscientious scruples, to manumit their bondmen, it is surpassingly strange that it should suddenly stop there. When men, from motives purely religious, had gone so far as to break the fetters from the limbs of their slaves, it is perfectly incomprehensible, that they should not have seen the justice of removing the still more galling restraints which they had themselves imposed on the consciences of their fellow-christians. Whether they did it, let the sons of the Puritans who glory in the appellation, give the response. Their very presence here solves the inquiry.

All the causes that have been named doubtless conspired to produce the result, which we now behold. A higher appreciation of Christianity; progress in the arts; improvements in agriculture; the advancement in civilization; all these elements and many more were at work harmoniously, but silently and imperceptibly, to develop a state of society in which villanage should no longer bear a part. After a while it was perceived on all sides that the institution was not in accordance with other things. Men did not arrive at this conclusion by any process of reasoning, but it obtruded itself upon them. They saw and felt it. Instead of operating with ease as aforetime, the institution was found to work

cumbrously ; it then became unnecessary ; and finally mischievous. Marching before these new elements, in obedience to an irresistible impulse, the parties instinctively abandoned such things as they no longer had occasion for ; lords dropped their villains when they became an incumbrance, some sooner, some later, as the rising tide overtook them. Who it was that held on to the last we have no means of knowing. The time when the final separation took place cannot be fixed within twenty years ; in fact, the reign in which it happened is not agreed on. But who will be at a loss hereafter to know why and when slavery ceased in Massachusetts ? Who will inquire in vain when the slave trade was abolished by the British parliament, or when emancipation was proclaimed in the West Indies ? These dates are fixed beyond the possibility of doubt, because, in an age of no greater religious or mental excitement than existed in the time of which we have been speaking, some men had come to the conclusion that slavery was wrong, and ought to be suppressed. Had the same notions prevailed respecting villanage, the circumstances attending its downfall would have been equally notorious.

But let us render justice to the early planters of Massachusetts. Their humanity is not to be degraded to a level of Queen Elizabeth or Sir John Hawkins. Their legislation, as soon as they could act, displayed a benignity on the subject of slavery as much in advance of any thing then existing at common law, or in the rolls of parliament, as the laws of Moses, in that respect, were superior to the polity of any nation in his time.

Governor Winthrop with his associates, having in possession the colonial charter, arrived at Boston in 1630. In 1641 the people adopted a code of laws made by themselves for their own special guidance and direction. It was drawn up by some of their most pious and practical men, after a residence of ten years in their adopted country, and with the light of all the experience which they had acquired in the art of self-

government. Among the "LIBERTIES," and under the head of "LIBERTIES OF FORREINERS AND STRANGERS" is the following article :

"There shall never be any bond slavarie villinage or captivitie amongst us unless it be lawfull Captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly selle themselves or are sold to us. And these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israell concerning such persons doeth morally require. This exempts none from servitude who shall be Judged thereto by Authoritie."

And under the head of "CAPITALL LAWS" is this further article :

"If any man stealeth a man or mankind he shall surely be put to death."

This is all too plain to admit of elucidation. They made a distinction between buying men and stealing men, and in their estimation, an important distinction it was, as we shall have occasion to see. They legalized the traffic in slaves, but prohibited kidnapping. Neither were these laws intended to remain a dead letter. A transaction soon came up which demanded their exercise, and the manner in which the law was enforced, shows that the makers were in earnest. It is related by Gov. Winthrop, and as it is valuable in exhibiting the real state of affairs at that time, about which notions somewhat crude now prevail, it will be inserted *verbatim*. The occurrence took place in 1645.

"In beginning of the winter," says the governor, "a Portugal ship lying at Nantascot, (now called Hull) the seamen stole diverse goats off the Islands there. Complaint thereof being made to the governor and council, they gave warrant to one Mr. Smith, who then lay with his ship in the same place, to require the Portugal to give satisfaction, or else to bring his ship up to Boston. Mr. Smith (who was a member of the church of Boston) sent one Thomas Keyser, his mate, with his long boat well manned, to require satisfaction, who coming to the Portugal did not reason the ease with him, nor give him any time to

consider, but presently boarded him, and took possession, and brought her up, and his men fell to rifling the ship as if she had been a prize. The Portugal being brought to the magistrates, and the theft proved, he was ordered to make double restitution (as our manner is) and the seamen were made to restore what they had taken out of the ship. So the Portugal departed well satisfied.

“The said Mr. James Smith with his mate Keyser were bound to Guinea to trade for negroes. But when they arrived there, they met with some Londoners, with whom they consorted, and the Londoners having been formerly injured by the natives (or at least pretending the same) they invited them aboard one of their ships upon the Lord’s day, and such as came they kept prisoners, then they landed men and a murderer,* and assaulted one of their towns, and killed many of the people, but the country coming down, they were forced to retire without any booty, diverse of their men being wounded with the negroe’s arrows, and one killed. Mr. Smith having taken in wine at Madeiras, sailed to Barbadoes to put off his wine. Being engaged there, and his wife being there also unprovided of maintenance, and his ship and cargo bound over unto the said Keyser, his mate, and others of Boston, who set out the ship, Keyser refused to let any of the wines go on shore, except he might have security for the proceeds to be returned on ship board. So the ship lay a week in the roads, and then Keyser, fearing that the master would use some means by other ships which rode there, to deprive him of the cargo, told him plainly, that if he would not come on board, and return to Boston (which was the last port they were bound to) he would carry away the ship and leave him behind, which accordingly he did ; and arriving at Boston about midsummer, he repaired to the magistrates, and told them how he was come away; and tendered the cargo to them, who finding that it was engaged to himself and others, and that there would be great loss in the wines if they were not presently disposed, delivered them to the merchants and himself, taking bond of him to respond to Mr. Smith, &c. A short time after, Mr. Smith came, and brought his action against Keyser and the other mariners for bringing away his ship, and by a jury of seamen and merchants, recovered three or four times the value of what he was damnified, and the mate Keyser to lose not only

* A small piece of ordnance.

his wages, but he and the rest of the merchants to lose the proceed or interest, for their stock and adventure, which was forty per cent., and all the mariners to lose their wages. But diverse of the magistrates being unsatisfied with this verdict (perceiving that the jury in their displeasure against Keyser, &c., did not only regard Smith's satisfaction for his damages, but also the punishment of Keyser) the defendants at the next court brought a review, and then another jury abated much of the former damages; whereupon Smith preferred a petition to the next General Court.

“For the matter of the negroes, whereof two were brought home, and near one hundred slain by the confession of some of the mariners, the magistrates took order to have these two set at liberty, and to be sent home; but for the slaughter committed they were in great doubt what to do in it, seeing it was in another county, and the Londoners pretended a just revenge. So they called the elders and desired their advice.”

These proceedings excited, as they were well calculated to, a good deal of commotion. At the next meeting of the General Court, the following memorial was presented by Richard Saltonstall:—

“TO THE HONORED GENERAL COURT.

“The oath I took this yeare att my entrance upon the place of assistant was to this effect: That I would truly endeavour the advancement of the gospell and the good of the people of this plantation (to the best of my skill,) dispencing justice equally and impartially (according to the laws of God and this land) in all cases wherein I act by virtue of my place. I conceive myself called by virtue of my place to act (according to the oath) in the case concerning the negers taken by Captain Smith and Mr. Keser; wherein it is apparent that Mr. Keser upon a Sabboth day gave chace to certain negers, and upon the same day took diverse of them; and another time killed others; and burned one of their townes. Omitting several misdemeanours which accompanied these acts above mentioned, I conceive the acts themselves to bee directly contrary to these following laws (all which are capitall by the word of God; and 2 of them by the lawes of this jurisdiction.)

“The act (or acts) of murder (whether by force or fraude) are expressly contrary both to the law of God and the law of this country.

“The act of stealing negers, or taking them by force (whether it be considered as theft or robbery) is (as I conceive) expressly contrary both to the law of God, and the law of this country.

“The act of chacing the negers (as aforesayde) upon the Sabbath day (being a servile worke and such as cannot be considered under any other heade) is expressly capitall by the law of God.

“These acts and outrages being committed where there was noe civill government which might call them to accompt, and the persons by whom they were committed being of our jurisdiction, I conceive this court to be the ministers of God in this case; and therefore my humble request is, that the several offenders may be imprisoned by order of this Court, and brought unto their deserved censure in convenient time; and this I humbly crave, soe that the sinn they have committed may be upon their own heads, and not upon ourselves (as otherwise it will.)

“Yrs. in all christian observance,

“RICHARD SALTONSTALL.”

It appears that this further proceeding was had in the matter. “Upon a petition of Richard Saltonstall, Esq. for justice to be done on Captain Smith and Mr. Keyser for their injurious dealings with negroes at Guinea, the petition was granted, and ordered that Captain Smith and Mr. Keyser be laid hold on, and committed to give answer at convenient time thereabouts.”

Now, what were the offences for which Smith and Keyser were required to give answer *thereabouts*? The foregoing memorial, which may be considered as a bill of indictment, specifies four; viz., murder; forcible abduction or kidnapping; Sabbath breaking; and arson.

Little or no stress is laid upon the last charge, the accusation being confined to the first three. Perhaps there was no law against arson; whereas the other acts were violations of the colonial laws, as well as contrary to the laws of God.

The true state of the case is this: Smith, who was a

member of the church of Boston, his mate, Keyser, and diverse Boston merchants fitted out a ship, bound to Guinea, to *trade for*, that is, to buy, negroes. Their object was to engage in the slave trade as a regular business transaction. They went about it in open daylight, without affecting the least concealment. Why should they disguise it? In simply buying heathen, pagan negroes, there was nothing which contravened the laws of England; nor the laws of the colony which they had just enacted; nor was there, according to their understanding, any thing contrary to the word of God. For aught appears in the history of the times, Captain Smith, who must have given satisfactory evidence of his piety, might have craved the prayers of the church for a blessing on his perilous undertaking. Had he adhered to his original purpose, and confined himself to merchandizing, we probably never should have heard of his adventure. But when he reached the coast, instead of trading for negroes, he was tempted to emulate the exploits of Hawkins, who had acquired, in the same field, both wealth and renown. He took what he deemed the shortest and cheapest method to obtain a cargo; supposing, that as he was beyond the jurisdiction of the colony, and interested in the enterprise with Boston merchants, as much lenity would be extended to him in that port as others had received in London. But he made a mistake. Actions which, if they did not procure Hawkins the honor of knighthood, were no obstruction to his high advancement, in Massachusetts were treated as crimes.

We have this further record :

“ 14, 3d mo., 1645. The court thought proper to write to Mr. Williams, of Piscataqua, (understanding that the negroes which Captain Smyth brought were *fraudulently* and *injuriously* taken and brought from Guinea by Captain Smyth's confession and the rest of the company,) that he forthwith sent the negro which he had of Captain Smyth hither, that he may be sent home, which this court doth resolve to send without delay. And if you have any thing to alledge why you should

not return him to be disposed of by the Court, it will be expected you should forthwith make it appear by yourself or your agent."

How the affair terminated with Smith and Keyser, I have never seen mentioned.

It does not appear that the transaction subjected Smith to any odium, or lessened him in the estimation of his neighbors. In his suit against Keyser he came off triumphant, although the wines in controversy must have been bought with the proceeds accruing from the sale of kidnapped negroes. Besides compensating him for the loss he sustained by the conduct of Keyser, the jury evidently intended to give him *smart money*; and when by review the damages were abated, instead of hiding his head for shame, he boldly appealed to the next General Court, which was the highest tribunal. If there was a party arrayed against him, he evidently felt sure of a party in his favor.

But slavery was not a new idea to our ancestors at the time of this transaction. Within seven years of their landing, a war broke out with the Pequods, a numerous and powerful tribe of Indians residing within the borders of Connecticut. The colonies were in imminent danger of being annihilated, and it was resolved that the most energetic measures should be adopted. The men who came to this conclusion seldom did things at the halves; and accordingly this once haughty race were utterly exterminated, and their country laid desolate. It is related that about seven hundred of them miserably perished together in their fort at Mystic. Hot pursuit was made after those who were not involved in the terrible calamity, and a few captives were taken. Forty-eight of them, being women and children, were spared and brought to Boston, the men having been put to death. These captives were disposed of through the country among the inhabitants. Some of them ran away and were taken and brought back by the neighboring Indians; "and those," says Winthrop, "we branded on the shoulder." Of another

lot of prisoners taken in the same war, Winthrop says, "the women and children were divided, and some sent to Connecticut, and some to Massachusetts. . . . We sent fifteen boys and two women to Bermuda by Captain Pierce, but he, missing it, carried them to Providence Isle." The purpose for which they were sent is clearly enough indicated, perhaps, although not specifically mentioned. Trumbull, in his *History of Connecticut*, comes out with it *flat-footed*. "The people of Massachusetts sent a number of women and children to the West Indies and sold them for slaves." Here is a whole community participating in the slave trade; the PEOPLE of Massachusetts, acting by their constituted authorities in their sovereign capacity. A more emphatic sanction of the practice could not be given.

It may be said in reply, that these were blood-thirsty savages, taken in a contest of their own provoking, when the conflict was hand to hand for very life; that harmless, inoffensive negroes would have been treated very differently.

But facts are opposed to this hypothesis. In 1630, when Governor Winthrop arrived in the Bay, he found Mr. Samuel Maverick already seated on Noddle's Island. He was a squatter, destitute of title. In 1633, to save himself, probably, from being forcibly ejected, he purchased his land of the colony; and being already within its limits, became subject to its jurisdiction. As early as 1639, he was the owner of sundry negro slaves of both sexes. It does not appear when or where he procured them, or how long they had been in his possession; but assuredly his course would not have been tolerated had it been illegal, or opposed to public sentiment. He was not a Puritan, but "strong for the lordly, prelatical power." This gave him no hold on the sympathies of those about him. Nevertheless, he was not molested. In a community where the most stringent laws were enforced with the utmost inflexibility against members of their own persuasion, it is not to be presumed that one of a different commu-

nion, and that, too, the most obnoxious, would be treated with greater indulgence.

In 1643, articles of agreement and confederation were entered into between the colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, New Haven, and Connecticut. The eastern settlements, and that of Rhode Island, were excluded from the compact on account of the laxity of their religious opinions. They go on to say :

“ It is also by these confederates agreed, that the charge of all just wars, whether offensive or defensive, shall, both in men and provisions, and other disbursements, be borne by all the parts of this confederation in different proportions, according to their different abilities ; and that according to the different charge of each jurisdiction and plantation, the whole advantage of the war (if it please God so to bless their endeavors) whether it be in lands, goods, or *persons*, shall be proportionably divided among the said confederates.”

This was not intended to be an idle display of rhetoric, but was reduced to practice upon the first occasion.

In 1676, the conflict known as Philip's War was brought to a close ; and the savages, after a most fierce and sanguinary contest, were completely defeated. In disposing of the prisoners, which was an affair of state, “ a great many of the chiefs were executed at Boston and Plymouth, and most of the rest were sold, and shipped for slaves to Bermudas and other parts.” The purpose for which the clause touching the advantage to be derived from *persons*, was inserted in the foregoing compact, is now apparent. The benefit was in this way made available, and was shared by every member of the body politic.

The Plymouth people, the same year, passed a law that no male Indian captive, over fourteen years of age, should be allowed to remain in the colony ; all persons who had such captives were required to send them out of the colony by the first day of December then next ensuing ; and every

Indian coming within the purview of the act, who should be found within the jurisdiction after that day, was to be seized by proper officers and sold for the benefit of the colony: an exception, however, was made in favor of five or six Indians to whom Captain Church had pledged his word, that if they behaved themselves well, they should not be sold into *foreign* parts.

In the same year (1676) Major Waldron, at Cocheco, in concert with some Massachusetts forces under Capt. Syll and Capt. Hawthorne, succeeded by stratagem in capturing, in a time of peace, about two hundred Indians, who had taken sides with Philip in the late war. They were sent to Boston. "Seven or eight, who were known to have killed Englishmen, were condemned and hanged; the rest were sold into slavery in foreign parts." Mather relates the exploit, with great satisfaction. These prisoners, having been captured by the public forces, must have been sold on public account.

The articles of confederation, before referred to, contain another provision, which shows that our ancestors were not exempt from the troubles that infest the community at the present time; although the remedy was then applied in much better temper than is displayed by their descendants. It runs thus:

"It is also agreed that if any servant run away from his master into any of these confederate jurisdictions, that in such case, upon certificate of one magistrate in the jurisdiction out of which the said servant fled, or upon other due proof, the said servant shall be delivered either to his master, or any other that pursues and brings such certificate or proof."

Slavery continued to flourish in New England, and negroes were introduced. Josselyn, who spent ten years in the country, (from 1663 to 1673,) says in relation to the people of Boston: "They have great store of children, and are well accommodated with servants; some of these are English and

others negroes." On this passage, Dr. Belknap remarks that they had negro slaves.

It is estimated that in 1680 there were in Massachusetts from one hundred to one hundred and twenty negro slaves.

In the same year, there were in Connecticut about thirty-seven.

It is said that but few blacks were at this time imported into Rhode Island.

The colonial charter of Massachusetts was annulled in 1684. Previous to that time, the political affairs of the colony had been administered with as much regard to public sentiment as they have been since the declaration of independence. The governor, assistants, and deputies were as much chosen by the freemen as the governor, senators, and representatives are now. The principal, if not the only difference, lay in the fact, that suffrage, instead of being universal, was restricted to church members, who alone could exercise the right. These were the men who admitted slavery in the first place, and without whose concurrence it could not have survived a single day. They had the power to repeal the law by which it was established ; a power they would not have been slow to exercise, had they thought its tendencies immoral or anti-scriptural. Had the owners proved contumacious, they could have been dealt with by a process as effective as that employed against Quakers, and Antinomians, and Anabaptists. Very many years afterwards, and in altered circumstances, under the provincial charter, efforts were made to that effect, and the royal governors interposed their vetos. It is to governors appointed by the crown that Mr. Jefferson alludes. His remarks have no application to governors who had been chosen by the people. But those who had the direction of affairs under the first charter could have had no suspicion that slavery was wrong. In the gloomy times that immediately preceded the extinction of the charter, when their fears had been excited by a horrid

meteor that hung in the air; while they were yet bemoaning the effects of a most cruel and bloody Indian war; when an inclement season had blighted the hopes of the husbandman, and an arbitrary and venal government in England threatened them with the loss of all those privileges which they had made such sacrifices to obtain—then they humbled themselves as they were accustomed to do in seasons of adversity, and sought, by a thorough reformation, to propitiate the divine favor. They called to mind their manifold transgressions and bewailed their short-comings. An enumeration of their offences, which is still on record, would occupy more space than we can afford. Among them, and standing in a conspicuous position, is “pride in wearing men’s hair like women’s hair;” “Quaker meetings;” “profaneness in persons turning their backs upon the public worship before the blessing is pronounced;” “a loose and sinful custom of riding from town to town, men and women together, under the pretence of going to lectures.” These and many other things were held up as constituting the crying sins of the day; but in the long list of evils that was exhibited, so they might be shunned and repented of, slavery no where finds a place.

“It is apparent,” says Mr. Coffin in his History of Newbury, “that slaves though not numerous in Massachusetts, were, notwithstanding the law, introduced without difficulty, and bought and sold without scruple by all classes of the people.”

I am not aware of the existence in early times of any law against slavery. If there was one, which was violated by *all classes* without scruple, the fact shows pretty clearly the state of public sentiment.

The first voice against slavery appears to have been uttered May 26, 1701, when

“The representatives of Boston were desired to promote the encouraging of the bringing of white servants, and to put a period to negroes being slaves.”

But by whom this request was made, or on what account, or with what success, does not appear.

There were many prudential and economical considerations which might have been urged for suppressing negro slavery. We are not by any means bound, in the absence of proof, to presume that this slight movement, which was not repeated, had its origin in conscientious scruples.

“The winter here,” says Dr. Belknap, “was always unfavorable to the African constitution. *For this reason* white laborers are preferable to blacks; and as whites were more numerous, there was not much encouragement to the importation of blacks, nor were they ever so prolific as the whites.”

In the early settlement of Georgia slavery was excluded. The reasons are said to have been partly politic and partly humane. This argument among others was used:

“It is necessary not to permit slaves in such a country, for slaves starve the poor laborer. For if a gentleman can have his work done by a slave, who is a carpenter or bricklayer, the carpenters and bricklayers of the country must starve for want of employment; and so of other trades.”

But had the Boston representatives prevailed, it is far from certain that much would have been gained in Massachusetts on the score of humanity. What would have prevented the same scenes from being repeated here that were enacted in Virginia?

“Conditional servitude under indentures or covenants,” says Bancroft, “had from the first prevailed in Virginia. . . . The supply of white servants became a regular business; and a class of men, nicknamed spirits, used to delude young persons, servants and idlers into embarking for America as a land of spontaneous plenty. White servants came to be a usual article of traffic. They were sold in England to be transported, and in Virginia, were resold to the highest bidder; like negroes, they were purchased on ship board, as men buy horses at a fair.”

This was done in old Virginia, the birth-place of Mr. Jefferson, where so much anxiety was exhibited, according to his representation, to suppress the slave trade.

Grahame says, "A provincial law enacted in 1712 prohibited the importation of slaves into Massachusetts." If the statement be correct, which I have no means at hand to verify, the law was soon repealed, or at any rate disregarded. Dr. Belknap, who was an ardent whig of the revolution, writing from Boston in 1795, says :

"By inquiries which I have made of our oldest merchants now living, I cannot find that more than three ships a year belonging to this port were ever employed in the African trade. The slaves purchased in Africa were chiefly sold in the West Indies, or in the SOUTHERN COLONIES ; but when these markets were glutted and the price low, some of them were brought hither. I remember one between thirty and forty years ago, which consisted almost wholly of children."

Dr. Belknap, who was an abolitionist as the term was then understood, as well as a whig, says that reflecting persons were divided in their opinions on the lawfulness of slavery. Yet with all his knowledge of men and things as they existed an hundred years ago, and with his extensive and critical researches into colonial antiquities, he was able to name but one person, who publicly protested against it. That individual was the venerable Samuel Sewall, Chief Justice of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and one of the Judges, who occupied the bench during the trial of the Salem witches ; and with whose concurrence nineteen persons were hanged, and one, for refusing to plead, pressed to death. This gentleman, about 1716, published a pamphlet in condemnation of slavery ; in which he was doubtless as sincere as he was in giving his assent to the aforesaid judgments. Mr. Coffin, the indefatigable historian of Newbury, says there was one other person who bore public testimony against the practice, Elihu Coleman of Nantucket. He concedes, that "excepting these

two persons, there appears to have been no public advocate for the slave in Massachusetts, till a short time prior to the revolution."

With one exception, slavery was universal throughout the British Colonies. In the province of Georgia, for a short time after its settlement, slavery was prohibited. In Massachusetts the social condition of the slave was as low as in any part of the country. Judge Sewall says, in his *Diary* in 1716, "I essayed to prevent Negroes and Indians from being rated with horses and cattle, and could not succeed."

Previous to this time their condition had awakened the sympathy of another philanthropist. Cotton Mather had at his own expense set up a school in Boston, where the negroes were taught to read. Some time afterwards, recording in his *Diary* the trials and afflictions to which he was subjected, he notices his efforts in behalf of the negroes. His exertions do not appear to have been taken so kindly as they were meant. Among his "Dark Dispensations," it is related that "many, on purpose to affront him, affix his name, Cotton Mather, to the young negroes, so that if any mischief is done by them, the credit of it comes upon him." The whites did not deem it necessary that the blacks should learn to read, and they felt no gratitude towards one who attempted to teach them.

There was no display of public sentiment against slavery in Massachusetts until a short time previous to the revolution. The Rev. W. B. O. Peabody, in his *Life of Cotton Mather*, says :

"One of the subjects mentioned in Cotton Mather's *Diary* is slavery, which, even as matter of history, is so completely forgotten in New England, that when he speaks of buying slaves, as he does more than once, he seems like the inhabitant of another country. He says that in 1706 he received a singular blessing. Some gentlemen of his society, having heard, accidentally, that he was in want of a good servant, had the generosity to purchase for him 'a very likely slave,' at an expense of forty or fifty pounds. He describes him as a negro

of promising aspect and temper, and says that such a present was ‘a mighty mighty smile of Heaven upon his family.’”

Dr. Colman, in a funeral sermon preached on account of his death, which happened in 1728, described him as “the first minister in the town; the first in age, in gifts, in grace; the first in all the provinces of New England for universal literature and extensive services.”

The statement in your essay that Jonathan Edwards wrote a vindication of the slave trade, is to the point. There is a tradition that he was a slave owner. He was born in 1703. Besides these distinguished and venerable men we may introduce the Rev. Dr. Stiles, who was President of Yale College. He was a settled minister in Newport, R. I., when the revolutionary war broke out. During his residence there, being in want of a servant, he sent a barrel of rum by a slave ship to the coast of Africa to be exchanged for a negro boy; and one was actually procured and brought home to him. It is fair to state that his views afterwards underwent a change; but he is introduced merely for the purpose of showing what the sentiments of New England, upon slavery, were at a given period of our history. These men, whose names have just been mentioned, were not only the most distinguished of their day, but they were all of them sons of distinguished clergymen. They must all have been educated in the sentiments and feelings which prevailed among the clergy at that period.

A whimsical bequest is noticed by Coffin, in his instructive and amusing history. Richard Dole, by his will, in 1698, gives to one of his children:

“My great bible, fowling-piece, musket, and also my negro boy, Tom.”—“In 1716, Rice Edwards, of Newbury, sells to Edward Greenleaf his whole personal estate, with all his goods and chattels, as also one negro man, one cow, three pigs, with timber, plank, and boards.”

But the inhabitants of New England did not expend all their energies in one direction. “They had both their do-

mestic and their foreign slave trade, and dealt in Indians as well as negroes." Many of the slaves in Massachusetts were Indians imported from the South. Thus, in 1708, Thomas Steele sells to John Farnum, of Boston, for thirty-five pounds, an Indian boy, called Harry, imported from the province of South Carolina. In 1725, Theophilus Cotton, of Hampton, deeds to Jonathan Poore, of Newbury, "all my indian boy Sippai, aged about sixteen." And as early as 1646, December 29th, William Hilton, of Newbury, sells to George Carr, for one quarter of a vessel, "James, my indian, with all the interest I have in him, to be his servant forever." And earlier still, Governor Winthrop himself, after having given in his last will his "island, called the Governor's Garden," to his son Adam, proceeds,— "I give him also my indians there and my boat and such household as is there." Possibly these were some of the Pequods which had been branded on the shoulder.

It is a mistake to suppose that our forefathers, who came to establish a religious commonwealth on these inhospitable shores, were imbued with many of the notions that constitute so large a portion of the stock in trade of a modern philanthropist. They were not Teetotallers, nor Non-resistants, nor Abolitionists. A careful and diligent perusal of the Bible, which they cherished with so much solicitude as the only rule of faith and practice, had never revealed to their understandings, that they were required, at their peril, to subscribe to any of those dogmas. On the contrary, they were valiant soldiers, temperate drinkers, and humane masters. Among them were found the Standishes, the Masons, and the Churches of colonial times. From the same stock sprung the Putnams, and the Starks, and the Prescotts, of the colonial wars and the revolution. Their sympathies extended to the sufferer as well as to the felon. In their legislation they clearly defined the crime and the penalty; and the moral suasion they made use of was very cogent, though

very brief. They gave the assurance, without the least mental reservation, that punishment would follow on the heels of wilful transgression.

The *Arbella*, on her first voyage, when she came freighted with as precious a cargo as ever crossed the Atlantic, carried under her hatches forty-two tons of beer, and two hogsheads of cider. This was not wafted across the great deep at so much trouble and expense to be poured into the dock.

In 1637, the colony of Connecticut, in making provision for the forces under Captain Mason, in the Pequod war, ordered, "that there shall be one good hogshead of beer for the captain, and minister, and sick men; and if there be only three or four gallons of strong water, two gallons of sack."

These men enacted laws to restrain the drinking of healths, because the practice encouraged intemperance. Had they *gone the whole figure*, such legislation would have been superfluous.

As early as 1634, brass farthings were banished by law from circulation, and musket bullets substituted as a portion of the currency.

They were humane masters. They resolved in the most solemn manner, in their legislative capacity, that slaves should have *all the Christian usages* that the laws of God confer on persons in that condition. Whether slavery is allowable by the Bible is a question of hermeneutics. According to their method of interpretation, it was allowable; and having settled it thus, what more could they do? This is conclusive as to their humanity, be their criticism what it may. There can be no pretence that they set up a false doctrine as a cloak for oppression; the law of God established in Israel, to which they expressly refer, no where authorizes oppression.

The law was made in good faith. They did not intend to mock the slave by false and hollow appearances. In the same code is this further provision:

“Every man whether Inhabitant or fforreiner, free or not free, shall have libertie to come into any publike Court, councel, or Towne meeting, and either by speech or writing to move any lawful, seasonable, or material question, or to present any necessary motion, complaint, petition, Bill, or information, whereof that meeting hath proper cognizance, so it be done in proper time, due order, and respective manner.” And further, “If any servants shall flee from the Tiranny and crueltie of their masters to the howse of any freeman of the same Towne, they shall be then protected and susteyned until due order be taken for their relife.”

But the time at length arrived, when the ties that had so long connected the white and colored races in Massachusetts were to be severed. The process by which this was effected affords an interesting subject of contemplation ; and fortunately we have a full description of it from one who was every way qualified for the task.

In 1795, Judge Tucker, of Virginia, addressed a letter to Dr. Belknap, then a minister in Boston, in which were propounded sundry inquiries in relation to slavery as it had existed in Massachusetts. He requested, among other things, to be informed by what process slavery had been abolished, and when the event took place. By no possibility could his application have been made to an individual better able to impart the information.

The correspondence is published in the fourth volume of Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc.

In his reply, which is very full and explicit, the Doctor says that “Slavery hath been abolished here by public opinion, which began to be established about thirty years ago.” In another place, he refers the commencement of this public opinion to “the beginning of our controversy with Great Britain.” He goes on to state that

“Not much was said in a public and formal manner, till we began to feel the weight of oppression from ‘our mother country,’ as Britain was then called. The inconsistency of pleading for our own rights

and liberties whilst we encouraged the subjugation of others, was very apparent ; and *from that time* both slavery and the slave trade began to be discountenanced. The principal cause was public opinion, and the present generation, at an early stage of life, imbibed that opinion, which has grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength." "At the beginning of our controversy with Great Britain, several persons, who before had entertained sentiments opposed to slavery of the blacks, did then take occasion publicly to remonstrate against the inconsistency of contending for our own liberty, and at the same time depriving other people of theirs." "The controversy began about the year 1766, and was renewed, at various times, till 1773, when it was warmly agitated, and became a subject of forensic disputation at the public commencement in Harvard College."

In 1767, an attempt was made in the legislature to discourage the slave trade, but the measure, through a disagreement between the two houses, failed before it was sufficiently matured to be presented to the governor. This was the first step in the series, that was ostensibly made with a view to effect the object. Various moves, from time to time, were afterwards made on the board without success ; and then the revolution intervened, and suspended for a long period all further operations. It may appear invidious to raise the inquiry even, whether the master spirits of the day were really in earnest to see their project succeed. It was a rousing subject for declamation, and one that offered a most inviting field for the display of their eloquence. It gave them an opportunity to show, that, in their aspirations after liberty, they were not exclusively selfish, but were willing to share the boon with the most helpless of their species. As the governor probably had instructions to resist all demands for popular rights, they were thus always prepared with a topic that would command the attention of their audience, and enlist the sympathies of the public. These remarks are made without a design to cast the least reproach on the memory of those illustrious patriots ; or to detract an iota

from their claims upon our gratitude. A purer, and at the same time, a more sagacious set of men, was probably never selected to wield the destinies of a people. But they are suggested by the circumstances to which the measure finally owed its consummation, and the great length of time that was suffered to elapse after all extraneous opposition to it was removed.

The war of the revolution had been fought; the revolt of the colonies had been successful; the people of Massachusetts had obtained complete mastery over their affairs, untrammelled by royal governors or mandamus councillors; and still the slave trade was not suppressed. Had the people become indifferent to the crime, which formerly so much excited their indignation, or were their representatives chosen fresh, year by year, from every walk of life, alone blind to the signs of the times, and deaf to the importunities of their constituents? Such is not usually the course pursued by public servants towards those, whom, with profound humility, no doubt, they delight to call their masters.

To solve this inquiry, recourse must be again had to Dr. Belknap, who was an eye-witness of the proceedings he describes, and one of the principal promoters, if not the originator of the scheme. He tells all how the statute for suppressing the slave trade was brought about; and the relation will be given in his own words. He proceeds:

“In the month of February 1788, just after the adoption of the present Federal Constitution by the Convention of Massachusetts, a most flagrant violation of the laws of society and humanity was perpetrated in this town (Boston) by one Avery, a native of Connecticut. By the assistance of another infamous fellow, he decoyed three unsuspecting black men on board a vessel, which he had chartered, and sent them down into the hold to work. Whilst they were there employed, the vessel came to sail, and went to sea, having previously cleared out for Martinico The public indignation being greatly excited against the actors in this affair, and against others who

had been concerned in the traffic in slaves, it was thought proper to *take advantage of the ferment* and bring good out of evil.

“Accordingly the Association of the Boston Clergy originated a petition to the legislature, praying for an act to prohibit the equipping and insuring vessels bound to Africa for slaves, and providing against carrying innocent blacks from home. The petition was circulated and signed by a great number of our reputable citizens. The blacks were *urged* to present a similar petition, which they did; and *fortunately* another of the same kind from the Society of Quakers, presented at a former session, was then lying on the table. All these were brought up together; and the effect was an Act passed March 26, 1788, ‘to prevent the slave trade, and for granting relief to families of such unhappy persons as may be kidnapped or decoyed away from this Commonwealth.’”

It will be borne in mind, that this proceeding was two and twenty years after the struggle is said to have commenced; some twelve years after the last vestige of British authority had vanished from the Old Bay State; and eight years after the citizens of the same had been in the full fruition of all the blessings which flow from a government of the most popular cast, under the guarantee of a constitution, the fundamental article of which was that “All men are born free and equal.”

And yet, what a vast combination of machinery was brought into play, to destroy a practice, which the sovereign people, we are taught, had time out of mind regarded with unmitigated disgust and abhorrence. All the aid that could be drawn from the venerable and reverend Clergy of Boston, from the Negroes, the Quakers, and a great number of reputable citizens, was concentrated to a focus on this memorable occasion. It is extremely questionable whether such an array has ever been presented, before or since, in our halls of legislation. Nor does it conclusively appear that all this would have been sufficient for their purpose, without the help of an entirely unexpected, but most appropriate event that was enough to excite the indignation of a stoic. It is certain that the efforts

of the Quakers alone were unavailing. Dr. Belknap recounts the transaction with the air of a man who has accomplished a most difficult undertaking ; not simply by urging the intrinsic merits of the measure upon those having the disposal of it, but by the exercise of consummate tact and address. Not a word escapes him expressive of impatience at the tardiness of the movement. He is rejoiced that the thing is done at last.

We have thus been told how both slavery and the slave trade were banished from Massachusetts. Some have supposed that the abolition of slavery was owing to the religious element which constitutes the essence of Puritanism. Dr. Belknap, who was an eye-witness of the whole proceeding, and, moreover, a clergyman, gives no such intimation. He ascribes it mainly, if not entirely, to political causes. In writing an account of the movement to which his attention had been particularly called, misrepresentation could only have been the result of deliberate fraud. Furthermore, if religious feeling was the moving cause, it would be evidence that piety existed in a more exalted state between 1766 and 1788 than at any former period. There is nothing to sustain such an opinion. During the intellectual struggle that preceded the appeal to arms, the pulpit, as a rule, responded to the voice of the people. The clergy, with but few exceptions, were whig. The value of their services was inestimable. But from what has been said of Dr. Edwards and Dr. Stiles, it is apparent that the conversion of a vast many of them to the side of abolition must have been by a process extremely expeditious.

If the charge be true, that Mr. Jefferson has brought against some of the Northern delegates in the Continental Congress, which proclaimed the Declaration of Independence, that while discharging the functions pertaining to that patriotic undertaking they were even then engaged in the Guinea trade ; it will readily be conceded that a great portion of the labor which has been bestowed on this performance might have been

spared. The accusation, to be sure, is vague and indefinite. It is not fixed upon any individual, nor upon any colony. We only know that by the North is meant New England, inasmuch as the epithet is never applied to territories west of the Hudson. But the whole New England people in those days were animated by the same spirit; and a rumor of this sort, if true, or even supported on probable testimony, must have been known to the whole community. By the choice of men, therefore, lying under such an imputation, the people declared most distinctly, that if not engaged in the slave trade themselves, they were not disposed *to make a fuss about it*.

It is time calmly to inquire, whether, at this day, we clearly understand and correctly appreciate the sentiments of SEVENTY-SIX on the subject of slavery; and particularly the views of those who established the Constitution upon that clause which now exercises such an absorbing interest; the clause providing for the surrender of fugitive slaves. Any thing illustrative of the opinions which those who framed that instrument entertained upon those points will be read with interest. There is one piece of documentary evidence existing among the statutes of Massachusetts, that, viewed in this light, is valuable.

The Constitution of the United States was ratified in Massachusetts by the Convention assembled for that purpose, on the sixth day of February, 1788. In less than two months after that joyful event, viz., on the twenty-sixth day of March following, the General Court passed the law which has just been described for suppressing the slave trade; and on the same day, be it remarked, they passed another Act for suppressing and punishing of Rogues, Vagabonds, and other idle and lewd persons, the sixth section of which reads as follows:

“Be it further enacted That no person being an African or Negro, other than a subject of the Emperor of Morocco or a citi-

zen of some one of the United States, (to be evidenced by a certificate from the Secretary of the State of which he shall be a citizen,) shall tarry within this Commonwealth for a longer time than two months; and upon complaint made to any Justice of the Peace within this Commonwealth that any such person has been within the same more than two months, the said Justice shall order the said person to depart out of this Commonwealth; and in case the said African or negro shall not depart as aforesaid, any Justice of the Peace within this Commonwealth, upon complaint and proof made, that such person has continued in this Commonwealth ten days after notice given him or *her* to depart as aforesaid, shall commit said person to any house of correction within the County, there to be kept at hard labor agreeably to the rules and orders of said house, until the Sessions of the Peace next to be holden within and for said County; and the master of said house of correction is hereby required and directed to transmit an attested copy of the warrant of commitment to the said Court on the first day of the session; and if upon trial at said Court it shall be made to appear that the said person has continued within the Commonwealth contrary to the tenor of this act, he or *she* shall be whipped not exceeding ten stripes, and ordered to depart out of this Commonwealth within ten days; and if he or she shall not so depart, the same process shall be had and the same punishment inflicted, and so *toties quoties*."

The constitution had just been ratified, and the circumstances attending it were fresh in the recollection of all men. The contest upon it had been arduous, and the vote, by which it was finally adopted, was a close one; yet when the deed was done, no person dreamed of resisting it. There was to be no evasion. The legislature not only intended to stand by the article, and see it executed when circumstances should demand it, but they went further, and attempted to remove all inducements for a slave to come here, by making the place beforehand too hot for him. Massachusetts meant to act with perfect good faith, and, as far as in her lay, to avoid all collision. For although entirely free herself, she was bounded on two sides at least by slave States. It was long after before slavery subsided in New York; and it may be news to

some, that New Hampshire at that time held men in vassalage. The often quoted letter of Dr. Belknap must serve us again. The doctor says:

“The present constitution of Massachusetts was established in 1780. The first article of the declaration of rights, asserts that ‘all men are born free and equal.’ . . . This was inserted, not merely as a moral or political truth, but with a particular view to establish the liberation of the negroes, and so it was understood by the people at large; but some doubted whether it was sufficient. . . . The State of New Hampshire established their constitution in 1783, and in the first article of the declaration of rights, it is asserted that ‘all men are born equally free and independent.’ The construction there put on this clause is, that all who are born since the constitution, are free, but those who were in slavery before, are not liberated by it. By reason of this construction (which, by the way, I do not intend to vindicate,) the blacks in that State are in the late census distinguished into free and slaves, there being no Indians residing within those limits.”

So much for a contemporaneous exposition of apparently synonymous phrases.

You, sir, are not without fears that St. Paul, were he to reappear, might meet with rough usage at the hands of some calling themselves Christians, for the part he felt himself constrained by the Holy Ghost to take on this exciting subject; and particularly for sending a runaway back to his master.

Of what punishment would they be adjudged worthy, who were engaged in promoting the law. the sixth section of the act which has just been quoted, were they to come again in the flesh? What man, who has the least desire to bask in the sunshine of popular favor, would dare to mount the stump in their behalf? And yet, it was passed by a senate, of which Samuel Adams was president, and approved by his Excellency, John Hancock: of all the world, just the two men, the extravagance of whose devotion to liberty had rendered them so preëminently obnoxious to the British authorities, that they alone were excepted from the amnesty which Gen.

Gage on certain conditions proffered to all besides. There are symptoms, which render it not improbable, that their offence might now, as then, be deemed "of too flagitious a nature to admit of any other consideration than that of condign punishment." It is also worthy of remark, that Hancock, at this particular moment, owed his elevation to the chair principally to the impression, that in consequence of his inflexible attachment to the people, he would exercise greater lenity towards the infatuated insurgents, who, under Shays had been involved in an unsuccessful rebellion, than they could expect from his opponent, Governor Bowdoin, who was looked upon as the advocate of more stringent measures. It cannot be supposed, that so experienced a pilot as Hancock, with his eye on such a political horizon, would have tolerated the least encroachment upon what was regarded as popular rights, or was known to exist in the popular wish.

In connection with the subject, it cannot be deemed impertinent to notice the proceedings of the Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts, as detailed in a Report presented May 30, 1849. At their meeting, in 1848, this venerable body, on motion of a most highly respectable member, appointed a committee to prepare a report which should contain "A brief History of the Rise and Progress of Slavery in our Country." In accordance with this resolution, a committee of ten was raised, and the report was the fruit of their labors. Having a year before them to mature their plans, the report was prepared with great deliberation. It appears by the record, that the report itself was not presented to the meeting; but an abstract, purporting to contain all its essential features was read and adopted with but one dissenting vote. The report has been printed and circulated as an expression of the views entertained by the convention; and I have seen no notice that it does not represent, in a satisfactory manner, the sentiments of the individual members. We are author-

ized, therefore, to look upon it as an official statement of the views which the Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts entertain of Slavery.

On the fifty-seventh page of the document, is the following paragraph, which is quoted entire :

“ They are familiar facts, that when Thomas Keyson (or Kezar) and James Smith imported a number of slaves into Massachusetts, in 1645, the citizens of Boston denounced them, and all others engaged in the same traffic, as ‘ malefactors and murderers ; ’ committed them to prison ; bore public testimony against ‘ the heinous crime of man-stealing ; ’ and ordered the negroes to be restored, at the public charge, to their native country, — the General Court at the same time, by letter, expressing their indignation at their wrongs ; also, that in 1652, the General Court of Rhode Island passed a well-considered law to this effect : ‘ That no black mankind, or white being, shall be forced by covenant, bond, or otherwise, to serve any man, or his assigns, longer than ten years ; ’ and that the man that will not let them go free, or shall sell them away elsewhere, to the end that they may be enslaved to others a longer time, he or they shall forfeit to the Colony forty pounds.’ And equally familiar is the melancholy fact, that these honorable movements of the Fathers of New England, two centuries ago, were thwarted and overruled by the covetousness and despotic authority of the mother country. Their wise enactments were set aside, and their consciences and rights subjected to the will of an unjust foreign government.”

Now what impression is this language naturally calculated to make ? What impression did the writer himself intend that it should make ? Why, manifestly, that in 1645, “ the citizens of Boston ” had their indignation aroused in consequence of the importation “ of a *number* of slaves.” This is the gist of it, so far as Smith and Keyser are concerned. But the peculiarities of the transaction, on account of which the people were exasperated, and which alone caused the determination to restore them to their native country, are wholly unnoticed. No allusion is made to the distinction created by law between *buying* men and *stealing* men. For aught that appears in the

document, the whole excitement was raised by the attempt to bring negroes here in the condition of slaves; and that it had no reference to the mode by which they had been obtained. Whether this is a fair and impartial exhibition of the entire proceeding, and worthy of the distinguished source whence it emanated, the history of the transaction already cited will enable the reader to decide. He will be struck by the thought, whether the account is marked by that appearance of candor which we always expect from the gown? Is it truthful, or, from some cause or other, is it not altogether disingenuous?

And what are we to infer from the notice taken in the Report of the law of 1652, concerning "black mankind," in Rhode Island? The most obvious meaning is, that the free-men of that colony were opposed to perpetual vassalage; and that the law limiting its duration would have remained in force during the whole term of their colonial dependence, but for the "covetousness and despotic authority" of the metropolitan government. If this is not the import of the two last sentences in the quotation, it is difficult to elicit one.

Providence was founded in 1636. Every body has heard of Roger Williams and his persecutions. He began his settlement, and set up a government by purchasing his land of the natives without any charter from the crown. In 1644 Williams went to England, and there prevailed on "both houses of parliament to grant unto him and his friends with him, a free and absolute charter of civil government for the parts of his abode." "Thus," says Bancroft, "were the places of refuge for 'soul liberty' on the Narragansett Bay incorporated 'with full power and authority to rule themselves.'" Things proceeded in this way until the Restoration. In 1663 Charles II. conferred a royal charter on Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Bancroft, speaking of the charter of Connecticut, granted in 1662, says, "It conferred on the colonists unqualified power to govern themselves." And

in relation to the Rhode Island charter, just referred to, he says, it "was at length perfected, and, with new principles, embodied all that had been granted to Connecticut." Then, as if no longer able to contain himself, he breaks out into the following encomiastic strains:

"This charter of government, constituting, as it then seemed, a pure democracy, and establishing a political system which few beside the Rhode Islanders themselves believed to be practicable, is still in existence, and is the oldest constitutional charter, now valid, in the world. It has outlived the principles of Clarendon and the policy of Charles II. The probable population of Rhode Island, at the time of its reception, may have been twenty-five hundred. In one hundred and seventy years that number has increased forty fold; and the government, which was hardly thought to contain checks enough on the power of the people, to endure even among shepherds and farmers, protects a dense population, and the accumulations of a widely extended *commerce*. Nowhere in the world have life, liberty, and property, been safer than in Rhode Island."

This was chanted no longer ago than 1837.

We have all heard how Newport was built up, and of THE COMMERCE from which she derived her wealth. Who can doubt the truth of the rumors after reading the anecdote of Dr. Stiles, which is given on the authority of President Wayland. If they are true, the time was when it might have been said of Newport, as a distinguished tragedian in one of his rhapsodies is reported to have said to an audience in Liverpool, "Every brick in your houses is cemented by the blood of slaves."

Except the encroachment of Andros from 1686 to 1689, Rhode Island never had any thing in the shape of a royal governor from beginning to end.

It must be apparent, that the Report is the production of one whose ideas were in great confusion, and consequently that he is sometimes obscure. Not to cavil about verbal inaccuracies, what will be thought of a *clergyman* who desig-

nates what he terms the "Mother Country" as a "Foreign Government." If Great Britain was foreign in respect to the Colonies, the Colonies must have stood in the same relation to her. But on the authority of Webster's Dictionary, "We call every country foreign, which is not within the jurisdiction of our own government." The Colonies were within and under the jurisdiction of Great Britain till the revolution. Their emancipation from British supremacy was the revolution.

The foregoing extract affords a fair specimen of the logical acumen and historical accuracy which pervades the Report. The writer was evidently letting off steam.

In conclusion, it is not improper to say a word about the Quakers. A foggy sort of notion is beginning to prevail, that from their origin, at any rate, from their settlement in this country, under William Penn, they have, as a denomination, been opposed to slavery. This position, if true, would only prove, that among many wild and visionary theories, which distinguish them as a sect, they adopted that of abolition. But the notion is not true. Opposition to slavery sprung up among them at a comparatively recent date. William Penn lived and died a slave owner. There is a letter on record from T. Matlack to William Findley, which gives an account of the rise and progress of this idea among them. Mr. Matlack, who, when he wrote, was an aged Friend, says :

"The practice of slave keeping in Pennsylvania and New Jersey commenced with the first settlement of the Province, and certainly was countenanced by William Penn. Penn left a family of slaves behind him. Slave keeping of course became general among Friends."

The earliest instance of emancipation among them known to Mr. Matlack, took place in 1742. It was not till eight or ten years after, that the yearly meeting began to lean in favor of the "oppressed African."

In regard to the improvement of the negroes, Penn attempted to legislate, not for the abolition of slavery, but for the sanctity of marriage among the slaves, and for their personal safety.

There is no more reason to suppose that George Fox was an abolitionist, than that Governor Winthrop was. They were brought up in the same notions respecting villanage, and so doubtless was John Locke. What those views were will pretty distinctly appear from the following extract from Grahame :

“Negro slavery lingered long in the settlements of the Puritans in New England, and of the Quakers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania ; although in none of these States did the climate, or the soil or its appropriate culture, suggest the same temptations to this inhumanity, which presented themselves in the southern quarters of America. Las Casas, so distinguished for the warmth of his philanthropy, first suggested its introduction into Mexico and Peru ; George Fox, the most intrepid and enthusiastic of reformers, demanded no more of his followers than a mitigation of its rigors in Barbadoes ; and the illustrious philosopher, John Locke, renowned also as the champion of religious and political freedom, introduced an express sanction of it into the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina.”

The clause which Locke introduced into the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, is this :

“Every freeman shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slave, of what opinion or religion soever.”

These sentiments of Locke did not lower him in the eyes of our ancestors. As evidence of the estimation in which his writings were held by the most zealous and enlightened advocates for liberty at the time when the flame was brightest the opinion of no one could be introduced which is entitled to greater weight than that of Josiah Quincy, Jr. In the last will of that pure and spotless patriot, who fell a martyr to the cause no less than Warren, the following clause occurs :

“I give to my son, when he shall arrive at the age of fifteen years, Algernon Sidney’s Works, JOHN LOCKE’S Works, Lord Bacon’s Works, Gordon’s Tacitus, and Cato’s Letters. May the Spirit of Liberty rest upon him !”

In the foregoing pages, an attempt has been made to show how far the establishment of slavery in Massachusetts was owing to the direct interference of the British government. One extract more from the oft quoted letter of Dr. Belknap will explain how far it was due to the proceedings of foreign or European merchants. Judge Tucker, in his searching examination, puts the following inquiry : “Whether it (the slave trade) was carried on by European or American adventurers ?” Dr. Belknap, in his reply, says :

“I do not find that European adventurers had any other concern here than to procure cargoes of our rum to assist them in carrying on their business.”

AMICUS.







